



Governors' Newsletter

Spring Term 2017



From Jan Heath, Chair of Governors

Dear Bedenham Parents and Carers: you will all be aware of the recent OFSTED inspection at Bedenham school, which gave an overall judgement of Requiring Improvement. This is not the result that anyone connected with the school wanted, however, if you have read the report carefully you will know that it contains many positive observations which indicate that the school is moving towards an improved outcome. For those of you who were unable to attend the Parents Briefing on 15th February, a brief resume of what was covered is given in this Newsletter.

Positives:

Leadership and Management

The Executive Headteacher and the Head of School have an accurate view of the school's performance; physical education and sports funding is used well to increase time spent playing sport (swimming -the outcome of the enhanced provision has been that pupils' skills and self-confidence have greatly improved); the school provides a broad and balanced curriculum; children talk enthusiastically about school trips; BESD 'Sharks' is led and managed effectively and the needs of the pupils are well met through activities which address individual needs; school leaders have been relentless in ensuring that the needs of the pupils who have SEN and disabilities are met (the current acting SENCO has...a clear vision as to what needs to be achieved in this area); the vast majority of the parents who expressed a view are happy with the school and would recommend it to others; the emphasis is on the children-not just academically but as a whole child, emotionally and socially; leaders keep governors fully informed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust systems are in place and all staff understand them. Staff and governors receive up to date training to ensure all requirements are met which includes the dangers posed by radicalisation and extremism. Leaders ensure the site is well maintained and secure, and appropriate risk assessments are in place to ensure pupils are safeguarded at all times. Parents and staff are positive about how well the pupils are cared for.

Teaching, Learning and assessment

Both the school and local authority recognise that since the start of the year, the quality of teaching has improved as a result of clear guidance and training from the school's leaders and outside agencies. The quality of phonics teaching in KS1 is good. Staff are skilled and the learning environment is well maintained, displays are used to good effect providing useful stimuli for the pupils. Pupils develop a love of reading and they value the reward systems in place for those who read at home regularly. Work in the Sharks provision is tailored to meet the individual needs of the pupils. Pupils make good progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Children report that if they have any concerns about bullying, they know they will be listened to and appropriate action taken. Pupils feel safe and relish the opportunities to take responsibilities. Service families are supported well. Pupils are polite and friendly towards visitors and talk confidently to adults. Breakfast club is well attended and much appreciated. The school has a good reputation for dealing with pupils with challenging behaviours. Attendance is improving due to focused targeting and support by the home school link worker, and instances of pupils regularly being absent from school have reduced. Behaviour at lunchtimes is good. Staff and pupils recognise the positive impact that leaders' actions have had.

Early years Provision

Children get off to a good start in the early years. Aspirations are high from the outset and teachers and support staff know children well. Parents speak highly of the relationships formed, with the team involving parents fully, offering workshops on how to support their child at home. Progress is carefully recorded and the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is improving.



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Concerns:

OFSTED concerns: Staffing turbulence, leadership (especially middle leaders & governance), outcomes (especially KS2), low level behaviour.

There has been a period of staff turbulence, primarily as a result of maternity leaves. At a recent meeting of headteachers another Hampshire school complained they have had 11 babies in 10 years - Bedenham has had 9 babies in 18 months, and more to come!

Recruitment is a national and local issue, but more so for the school as adverts have been for temporary positions, e.g. maternity leave covers.

It takes time to 'Bedenhamise' staff, i.e. learning the best strategies for dealing with specific children - a 'getting to know you period' is inevitable.

There is currently a programme of ongoing professional development to improve the quality of teaching & learning, as well as leadership capacity making use of Federation expertise, local teaching school and Hampshire advisers as well as internal expertise.

Changes to middle leadership - many staff have agreed to take on new and additional responsibilities but they need training and support to fulfil these roles.

A quote from the OFSTED report - "Ensuring governors know their roles and are able to exercise their duties fully ...of the opinion that they are not qualified to comment on aspects of school life". This is a very specific but misrepresented comment. Since Federating we have not had a fully complemented governing body, despite ongoing efforts to recruit. As a result, the focus has been on statutory requirements, e.g. safeguarding. Governors commented they aren't qualified to make judgements about the quality of lessons when observing but they then explained that they use a range of evidence, e.g. LA reports, data analysis, senior leaders views, etc. to triangulate and challenge views.

In Early Years there is an ongoing upward trend, showing a rise in outcomes of 24% over the last two years and now in line with all national measures. Year 1 phonics is now consistently in line or better than national, and Year 2 has been in line with national for several years, although there was a slight dip last year. Year 6 have consistently met floor targets for several years up until last year.

The future:

- *EYFS leader and SENCO return from maternity leave just prior to Easter*
- *2 x KS1 staff return prior to the Summer break and will job-share from September*
- *Current staff have been involved in a focussed programme of Continued Professional Development to develop their leadership capacity, but this doesn't happen overnight*
- *The Local Authority is supporting the school appropriately and as senior leaders we have sought this support for areas we have identified as needing improvement*
- *The Local Authority are undertaking a governance review - the main results of which will be shared with you once completed*
- *We have successfully recruited three new governors from Bedenham parents, one as a parent governor and two as co-opted governors and in addition a governor from another local school has agreed to join us*

Behaviour: We pride ourselves on turning children around, giving them a second chance at education. We are recognised in the community as being inclusive and nurturing, but this means we are victims of our own success at times.

It takes time and lots of energy to be successful with troubled children and Ofsted recognised the good work we do with children who are difficult.

Their concern was with LOW LEVEL behaviours witnessed in only two classes - arguing, poor learning attitudes, work avoidance. They also noted boisterous behaviour in corridors at transitions times.

Quick Changes: Red letter texts, review behaviour policy, support staff with behaviour management strategies, more parent meetings, higher expectations of behaviour.

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Known Parent concerns: Federation, mixed age classes, more extreme behaviour.

- The Federation has enabled staff working in the same year groups to collaboratively plan, and allowed subject leaders to action plan and monitor together.
- *There are regular opportunities for staff to work together, making judgements regarding standards.*
- Maths and English subject leadership at Bedenham has been impacted negatively by the staff turbulence and we have drawn on some of Holbrook's resources and personnel for support.
- *When we identify staff whose practice needs to improve we give them opportunities to observe in the other Federation school - usually we ensure that a senior leader attends too.*
- We have been able to hold joint INSET days and staff meetings when issues arise that are common to each school, thus enabling a wider sharing of expertise and experience but also some sharing of costs, e.g. when buying in external expertise.
- *Senior leaders from across the two schools, including the SENCOs, undertake various joint monitoring activities including lesson observations, planning and work scrutiny. This gives us the opportunity to challenge each other. We also use a range of external support to validate our judgements.*
- We have been able to retain individual good staff by offering them the opportunity to work in the partner school, who, without the Federation, would have been looking to move on for their own professional development.
- *An example of shared resources might be around high quality texts which we are using within English lessons - to purchase class sets of books is inevitably expensive and we have purchased sets that Holbrook have also used and vice versa.*
- Bedenham has a PAN (Published Admission Numbers) of 45 which means we have to take up to 45 in each year group - this has been the case ever since the old Infants and Juniors amalgamated to become a primary school some 20 years ago. This inevitably means there has to be mixed age classes and again this has been the case for several years. If and when there has been a small cohort/year group we have had single age classes but with an increasing school population this is simply not possible.
- *Bedenham used to have two spare classrooms, and a dedicated library space plus an IT suite. These spaces are now fully used as classrooms and even with these spaces available we would still not have enough rooms for separate year groups.*
- Budgets over the last few years are increasingly squeezed and even if we had enough physical space, we simply could not afford to have class sizes of 22/23; it would be unsustainable.
- *There are a lot of Gosport schools who, either due to their PAN being 45 or as a result of specific year group sizes, have to have mixed age classes and in some cases there are classes with three year groups in one room - we try to avoid this if possible at Bedenham!*
- If we had none of the restrictions we would no doubt have single age classes. Each year we consider the specific year group numbers and the individual children within that year group in planning for the class arrangements.